

What is *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) disease?

Hib is one of the most important causes of serious bacterial infection in young children. Hib may cause a variety of diseases such as meningitis (inflammation of the coverings of the spinal column and brain), blood stream infections, pneumonia, arthritis, epiglottitis, and infections of other parts of the body.

Who gets Hib disease?

Hib disease is most common in children three months to three years of age. It is unusual in persons over the age of five.

How is Hib disease spread?

Hib disease may be spread through contact with mucus or droplets from the nose and throat of an infected person.

What are the symptoms of Hib disease?

Symptoms may include fever, vomiting, listlessness, and a stiff neck or back. Other symptoms depend upon the part of the body affected.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

Symptoms generally appear in less than 10 days after exposure, commonly within 2 to 4 days.

When and for how long is a person able to spread Hib disease?

The contagious period varies and, unless treated, may persist for as long as the organism is present in the nose and throat, even after symptoms have disappeared. A person can no longer spread Hib disease after taking antibiotics for 1 to 2 days.

Does past infection with Hib disease make a person immune?

No. Children who have had Hib disease can get it again.

What is the treatment for Hib disease?

Specific antibiotics are generally used to treat serious infections.

Should people who have been in contact with someone diagnosed with Hib infection be treated?

Preventive treatment is only recommended in specific instances. For example, treatment with an antibiotic is recommended for household members when there is at least one unvaccinated child under 4 years of age in the home. In certain instances, preventive treatment will be recommended in day care centers. Casual contact such as occurs in classrooms or office settings is not usually significant enough for preventive treatment to be recommended.

What can be done to prevent the spread of Hib disease?

A variety of Hib vaccines are currently available. All children should be vaccinated against Hib beginning at approximately 2 months of age. Contact your physician or local health department for further information about vaccination.

